



PhD workshop on Religion and Culture with Leibniz Professor Lori Beaman

at the Centre for Advanced Studies

“Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities”, Leipzig University,
in collaboration with the “Nonreligion in a Complex Future” Project, University of Ottawa

9–10 March 2023

Convenors: Lori Beaman (University of Ottawa), Christoph Kleine (Leipzig University),
and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (Leipzig University)

In the context of the Workshop “[Who is ‘Us’: Our Culture, our Values, our Heritage and the Reconfiguration of Religion](#)” hosted by [Leibniz Professor Lori Beaman](#) and the KFG “Multiple Secularities” at Leipzig University, we invite graduate students to present and discuss their work on the relationship of Religion and Culture in a designated panel.

We are especially interested in the transubstantiation of religion **to** culture. In countries characterized by an historical Christian majority (in some cases a consequence of colonialism) and a contemporary decline in religious affiliation for example, a symbol or a practice which might have traditionally been understood to be religious is now reconstituted as ‘our culture and heritage’. The most visible place in which these debates take place is in law, often when nonreligious people, usually atheists, challenge the symbol or practice under human rights protections. But the reconstitution of practices and symbols takes place in everyday life as well, crafting discursive frameworks that shape the understanding of who belongs to the ‘us’ whose culture and heritage is to be preserved. In this workshop we are concerned with practices and symbols one encounters in the course of day-to-day life: symbols such as crosses and crucifixes in social institutions, prayers in public spaces and even extended claims to culture which are compatible with majoritarian Christianity (eating pork as part of who ‘we’ are, for example). Finally, the rise of the culture and heritage narrative coincides with, in some cases, a reconstituted nationalism. It plays a central role in populist movements which link the ideas of traditional culture – often associated with religious symbols – being under threat with a turn against “foreign” influences, may it be Islam or groups promoting sexual liberties.

We are interested in your perspectives on these, but also on all other social constructions of boundaries that relate to the religion to culture reconfiguration and want to give graduate students from Leipzig University an opportunity to discuss their projects with their peers and the broader audience of the workshop in a designated panel. Please send a short abstract (max. 500 words) and a CV to multiple-secularities@uni-leipzig.de by 13 February 2023.